

Free Time and Leisure Participation

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES



Edited by
G. Cushman,
A.J. Veal and
J. Zuzanek



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CABI Publishing is a division of CAB International

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Tel: +44 (0)1491 832111
Fax: +44 (0)1491 833508
E-mail: cabi@cabi.org
Website: www.cabi-publishing.org

Tel: +1 617 395 4056
Fax: +1 617 354 6875
E-mail: cabi-nao@cabi.org

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library, London, UK.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Free time and leisure participation : international perspectives / edited
by Grant Cushman, A.J. Veal and Jiri Zuzanek
p. cm.

Updated and expanded ed. of: World leisure participation. 1966.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-85199-620-5 (alk. paper)

1. Leisure--Cross-cultural studies. 2. Recreation--Cross-cultural studies.

3. Recreational surveys. I. Cushman, Grant. II. Veal, Anthony James.

III. Zuzanek, Jiri. IV. World leisure participation. V. Title.

GV181.3.F74 2004
790.1--dc22

2004011056

ISBN 0 85199 620 5

Typeset in Optima by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester.
Printed and bound in the UK by Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn.

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Preface

This book is an expanded and updated edition of *World Leisure Participation: Free Time in the Global Village*, published in 1996 (Cushman, Veal and Zuzanek, 1996). An updated version of the book is justified on a number of grounds.

First, since the mid-1990s, worldwide patterns of leisure participation have changed, as have the social, political, economic and cultural influences on leisure. In each of the chapters in the book, updated national survey data on leisure participation are included which, in some cases, provide a basis of comparison with earlier surveys to establish temporal trends.

Secondly, additional countries have been included, reflecting the increasing amount of survey activity taking place around the world.

Thirdly, more explicit reference has been given in this book to time-use, or time-budget, surveys. In the earlier book only a few chapters presented time-use data. An advantage of time-budget data is that cross-country comparisons are easier than for participation survey data. The methodological variation which bedevils participation surveys, is constrained, but not eliminated, in time-budget studies, due to the universal metric of 24 hours and 1440 minutes/day. This change is reflected in the changed title of the book, with its emphasis on *time*.

Fourthly, analysis of national patterns of leisure participation has been given a somewhat wider frame: in addition to addressing age, gender and socio-economic status, refer-

ence is also made in most chapters to the effects of globalization and new communication technologies, particularly the use of the Internet for leisure purposes.

The book concentrates on economically developed countries, with a particular focus on Europe. We have endeavoured to source contributions from other regions of the world, but have been only partially successful. There are various reasons for this. Some Third World, or developing, countries do not have the resources to devote to substantial research on leisure, including large-scale, national leisure participation surveys. In other cases, local or regional research on leisure does exist, but no national participation or time-budget surveys could be identified. Further, we have generally identified potential contributors through the various leisure studies conferences, cross-national research groups and discussion networks, and not all countries are represented in such networks.

The aim of the book is similar to that of the 1996 edition: to bring together, as a reference source, the results of survey research on patterns of national leisure participation from around the world. Our intention is to establish, as far as possible, the extent to which this research might provide insights into the general nature of, and levels of participation in, leisure activities and leisure involvement of populations within participating countries, and

whether it is possible to make preliminary comparisons between countries.

As with the first edition, the book has an ambitious agenda and it contains a wealth of material that goes a long way to answering core questions about national and cross-national leisure participation. We trust that it will prove

valuable to academic colleagues, students and policy-makers around the world.

Grant Cushman
A.J. Veal
Jiri Zuzanek
March, 2004

1 Leisure Participation and Time-use Surveys: an Overview

Grant Cushman, A.J. Veal and Jiri Zuzanek

Introduction: Why Leisure Participation Data?

What are the trends in the use of the Internet for leisure purposes around the world? Is leisure time increasing or decreasing? Is active participation in sport increasing or decreasing in developed, newly industrialized and developing countries? Which social groups patronize the arts, visit national parks or play sport, and which groups do not? Despite the increasing global significance of sport, entertainment, culture and the conservation and use of the environment, it is still not possible to provide definitive answers to simple questions like these on worldwide patterns of leisure participation. Data are collected on an internationally comparable basis on a wide range of phenomena, such as health, housing, education and economic activity,¹ but little if any comparable data exist for leisure activity. It might be thought that leisure is not sufficiently important to justify the cost of gathering such information, but at national level its importance is widely recognized, so that, over the years, governmental bodies, academics and commercial organizations in many countries have compiled national data on patterns of leisure participation and expenditure. In addition to its social and cultural significance, leisure, in its many forms, is a substantial sector of government and it is a growing market phenomenon, providing jobs,

incomes and economic development. In aggregate, it could therefore be said to be an increasingly significant phenomenon internationally.

Further, leisure is one of the basic human rights safeguarded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as the following articles indicate:

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.
(Article 24)

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
(Article 27)²

In 1987, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations declared:

One of the primary needs of the human person is leisure and such use of it as will provide psychological strength and refreshment.
(Perez de Cuellar, 1987)

In Europe, the idea of leisure as a right has been embraced in relation to one aspect of leisure, namely sport, in the Council of Europe, in its 1978 *Sport for All Charter*, which stated:

Every individual shall have the right to participate in sport.
(Council of Europe, 1978)

Thus leisure has been recognized by national governments and international organizations as being of sufficient importance to be accorded the status of a human right and a human need. In the same way that other aspects of human rights and social and economic welfare are monitored internationally, there is therefore a case for leisure to be similarly monitored. Social and economic rights, however, generally attract less governmental attention than civil and political rights; indeed, referring to the Universal Declaration's articles on economic and social rights, David Harvey has said:

What is striking about these articles . . . is the degree to which hardly any attention has been paid over the last fifty years to their implementation or application and how almost all countries that were signatories to the Universal Declaration are in gross violation of these articles. Strict enforcement of such rights would entail massive and in some senses revolutionary transformations in the political-economy of capitalism.

(Harvey, 2000, pp. 89–90)

Whether or not the idea of rights is invoked, governments at national, regional and local levels, throughout the world, are heavily involved in supporting and promoting such sectors of leisure as: sport; physical recreation and education; outdoor recreation in urban and natural areas; children's play; the arts; natural and cultural heritage; and broadcasting. This involvement is justified on the grounds that such leisure activities make significant contributions to the quality of life of individuals and communities (Marans and Mohai, 1991) and overlap with other important governmental responsibilities, such as conservation, education, enhancement of national unity and identity and economic development. There are also aspects of leisure that can be harmful, such as abuse of legal and illegal drugs, problem gambling, sporting accidents and activities that cause environmental or cultural degradation. Here, governments become involved in regulation, education and sometimes prohibition. Whether promoting, providing for, regulating or combating forms of leisure activity, governments and the communities they serve need statistical data to indicate the scale of need and

demand, and to monitor the effects of government policy and activity.

But leisure is not only a public sector phenomenon: consumer expenditure on leisure in developed economies is estimated to be as high as 25% of all consumer expenditure (e.g. Martin and Mason, 1998; Veal and Lynch, 2001, pp. 136–139). Leisure industries are a significant aspect of the process of globalization, particularly in the area of international film, music, television, sport and tourism. It is also an intrinsic part of local economies, in the form of restaurants, bars, hotels and clubs, retail outlets and live arts, sport and entertainment venues. While most of the surveys reported on in this book are publicly available and government funded, used primarily by public bodies for policy and planning purposes, they are also of interest to the private sector. A number of surveys which collect data on consumer expenditure on leisure, as well as participation, are conducted in various countries around the world to serve the needs of the commercial sector, but are generally only available on a subscriber basis (e.g. Mintel in the UK (see Mintel, nd) and Simmons in the USA (see Kelly and Warnick, 1999)).

This book and its predecessor (Cushman *et al.*, 1996) were designed to draw together existing information on patterns of leisure participation from a number of countries. The existence of these surveys, often conducted at considerable expense, is an indication of a growing worldwide recognition of the importance of leisure to communities, nations, economies and environments. The data from the various countries represented were collected at different times, using widely differing methodologies, so possibilities for comparison between countries are very limited. It is to be hoped that the act of publishing this book and demonstrating the problems of comparison, will stimulate consideration of ways in which future surveys might be designed with international comparison in mind.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter we consider first the role of national leisure participation surveys in leisure studies, and then review a number of predecessor publications which have sought to present international comparative research on leisure and aspects of leisure. This is followed by a discussion of the

problems of conducting international, or cross-national, comparative research in general.

Leisure Surveys at National Level

Data are regularly collected by most governments for a limited number of aspects of leisure, as a by-product of taxation, licensing and other forms of regulation. Thus, for example, in countries where the activities are legal, data are generally available on expenditure on gambling, and on expenditure on and consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Data are also assembled by most countries on international travel, as a result of border controls. Data on working hours – in part the converse of leisure time – are gathered as a by-product of industrial and economic policy. Data on mass media use are generally gathered for commercial reasons and sometimes for licensing purposes. For more comprehensive, and in-depth, information on leisure participation, however, it is necessary to conduct special social surveys of the population. Such surveys can take two forms: *activity-based* or *time-based*.

Activity-based leisure participation surveys use questionnaires to gather information on people's recalled participation in leisure activities over a specified period of time (the 'reference period'), such as a month or a year.

Time-based surveys sometimes called 'time-budget' or 'diary' studies, these require respondents to keep diaries of all their activities over a specified period of time, usually 1 or 2 days. Start and finish times of activities are recorded in the diaries, including simultaneous activities (for example, listening to the radio while eating) and sometimes the location and company involved. In these surveys leisure time is just one element of the data collected.

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents, and sometimes other lifestyle or attitude data, are also gathered in both types of survey.

As far as its leisure content is concerned, the time-use survey can be seen as a participation survey with a short reference period. For studying leisure as a whole, broad categories of

leisure, or a few individual activities which most people do on most days, such as watching television or listening to the radio, the short reference period of the time-use survey presents few difficulties. But if the researcher is interested in individual activities, a time-use survey will often include only a very small sample of participants, making detailed analysis difficult, if not impossible. For example, one time-use survey indicates that, on a typical day, an average of 5 minutes is spent visiting 'entertainment and cultural venues' (see Table 2.9). However, this involves only 4.3% of the population (ABS, 1998, p. 22). With a total sample of, say, 10,000 this means that 430 are cultural participants. This is a small sub-sample upon which to base the analysis of individual cultural activities, some of which might involve as few as perhaps 2% of all cultural participants – that is, a sub-sample of just eight or nine in the example. By contrast, a reference period of a month or a year produces much larger sub-samples of cultural participants – perhaps 50% or 60% of the sample – providing large enough sub-samples to facilitate detailed analysis, such as examination of the age, class or gender composition of participants in individual activities. Therefore, while time-use studies are invaluable for examination of broad patterns of leisure time availability and relationships between leisure and paid and unpaid work and other activities, leisure researchers and policy-makers also use participation surveys with longer reference periods for detailed analysis. Hence the chapters in this book generally present data from both types of survey.

While a few leisure participation and time-use surveys are known to have been carried out in the first half of the 20th century, the modern era of survey-based leisure research began in the 1960s, particularly with the work of the United States Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC, 1962), which utilized, among other techniques, large-scale national participation surveys to establish base data on levels of participation. Other Western countries rapidly followed suit with their own surveys. The impetus for conducting studies of leisure activity at this time was the challenge presented to planners in most Western countries by the combination of growing affluence,

significant increases in car ownership and consequent growth in car-based recreation, and the rapid growth of the population, particularly of the then young 'baby boomer' population. At that time, large-scale, national or regional, time-use and questionnaire-based community leisure participation surveys vied with on-site surveys of users of individual recreation facilities or networks of facilities (usually outdoor recreation areas) as the main vehicle for empirical data collection on leisure.

Time-use surveys also have a history stretching back into the first half of the 20th century, but were recognized as an element of leisure studies with the advent, in the 1960s, of the Multinational Comparative Time-budget Research Project, which is described below (p. 6). Many individual countries have conducted time-budget surveys in the intervening 35 years, partly as a contribution to leisure policy, but also in regard to other policy concerns, such as gender equity in paid and unpaid work time.

The initiative and resources for the participation and time-use surveys have come largely from governments and government agencies, driven by policy concerns, while academics and consultants have been involved as advisers and as primary and secondary analysts. Early surveys were generally purely descriptive. Governments of the day, concerned about outdoor recreation, sport and physical recreation, or patronage of the arts, needed data in order to formulate, refine or monitor policies; the surveys provided an initial 'position statement' – for example, on the proportion of the population engaging in sporting or cultural activities and the variation in participation levels among various social groups. But in some cases, studies were also predictive. In situations of rapid economic and demographic growth, the data provided the basis for demand forecasting so that governments could be assisted in planning for the future.

The early surveys can therefore be seen as part of a general concern for social policy issues which was a feature of interventionist Western governments of the 1960s. In the former eastern European communist bloc they reflected government aims to establish 'socialist lifestyles' and to research ways and means of

achieving this (Filipcova, 1972). While governments have generally become less interventionist over the intervening 30 years, many of the institutions established in the 1960s to administer government policies on various aspects of leisure, have continued to generate a demand for data on leisure participation and time-use.

In the area of social behaviour the 'facts' are continually changing, in contrast to the situation in most of the physical sciences where a discovery, once made, is forever true (even though its theoretical explanation may change). In the social sciences a discovery may be true only for the instant in which it is made; from that time on its value as a description of contemporary society begins to 'decay'. It therefore becomes necessary to update such data continually. This is certainly true of data on patterns of leisure behaviour and time-use. Indeed, it is the actual and potential *fluidity* of leisure behaviour that often gives rise to the need for data collection in the first place. Changes in patterns of leisure participation arise from cultural, social, economic and environmental influences, such as changes in social values, personal incomes or technology. Governments and other organizations seek to anticipate and monitor these changes, particularly when they seem to call for a policy response. For example, government agencies must cope with increased demand for recreation on remote and ecologically fragile public lands brought about by increased mobility, or pressure on water areas resulting from increased population. In other situations, governments and other organizations seek to stimulate change themselves – for example in promoting sports participation and exercise to counter increasing obesity arising from changed diet and lifestyles, or promoting participation in the arts to foster community spirit and urban regeneration. In these cases, data are required to monitor trends and to assess the 'before and after' effects of policy measures.

Thus, while surveys of leisure participation and time-use have had a chequered history, where governments have had an interest in leisure – or aspects of leisure, such as sport, outdoor recreation or tourism – and where the resources have been available, periodic surveys have become the norm. In many cases

the surveys are conducted by the official national statistical agency, which is also responsible for the census of population and other official statistics. In other cases, the data collection is commissioned by government departments from commercial or academic survey organizations.

In addition to their policy roles, early leisure participation surveys, in particular, laid the groundwork for the development of a variety of research traditions in leisure studies. Researchers in the USA developed approaches based on quantitative modelling and demand prediction, and on quantitative behavioural models at the individual/psychological level (Cichetti, 1972). These models have tended to be prominent in leisure research in North America ever since. In the UK and Europe the quantitative/modelling approach was soon largely abandoned in favour of a more direct use of such data in policy formation and monitoring. Fred Coalter (1999) has referred to the contrasting traditions as the North American 'leisure science' tradition and the European 'leisure studies' tradition.

Academics in the social sciences – and in leisure studies in particular – do not themselves generally have access to resources to conduct large-scale empirical research, and so have been reliant on government-sponsored surveys when discussing general patterns of leisure behaviour. While theoretical and critical researchers in the leisure area have generally eschewed the survey method, they have nevertheless often drawn on the evidence of survey data as a starting point for their analyses, particularly in relation to social class and gender differences in participation levels, and in relation to publicly subsidized areas of leisure, such as elite sport, the arts and outdoor recreation. As the field of leisure studies has grown as an area of tertiary study, leisure participation survey data have found a role in textbooks and in the classroom, in providing students with an empirical picture of leisure participation patterns.

Large-scale national leisure participation surveys have become increasingly sophisticated over the years (Cushman and Veal, 1993) but they have often had a 'bad press' from academics, particularly those wedded to the increasingly popular – and indeed orthodox –

qualitative research methods in the field. In order to establish the case for undertaking, or placing more emphasis on, qualitative empirical research and non-empirical theoretical research, commentators often outline the limitations of quantitative methods, including surveys (e.g. Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pp. 26–27; Rojek, 1989, p. 70; Henderson, 1991, p. 26; Aitchison, 1993; Wearing, 1998, pp. 13–14). Critics often impute motives and attitudes to researchers who utilize survey methods, implying that they are somehow wedded to a somewhat outdated and extreme version of 'positivism', to the exclusion of other research approaches. The cumulative effect of repeated detailing of their failings and limitations has been to put surveys in a bad light with some of the leisure research community, and to create a 'phoney war' between alternative methodologies. The survey method has strengths and limitations, as do all research methods. For example, for the survey method, making definitive descriptive statements about the community as a whole is routine, but explanation of observed behaviour is often speculative at best. Conversely, qualitative methods are often strong on explanation but relatively weak with regard to reliable generalization to the wider community. Thus survey methods, other quantitative methods and qualitative research methods should, in our view, be seen as complementary (Kamphorst *et al.*, 1984).

Some of the implied criticism of surveys is that they consume substantial resources which are therefore denied to (and would go much further in) other forms of research. Roberts, for example, has stated: 'Sociologists are entitled to protest at this rampant and excessive fact-gathering' (Roberts, 1978, p. 28). But, as indicated above, large-scale surveys tend to be conducted for policy rather than theoretical purposes: they do not generally compete for the same resources as other forms of leisure research. The considerable resources devoted to the conduct of particular policy-orientated leisure participation surveys would probably not be available for purely academic research purposes. In fact, virtually all academic use of such survey data is secondary and is often undertaken with little or no specific funding. While non-survey methods also have a place in